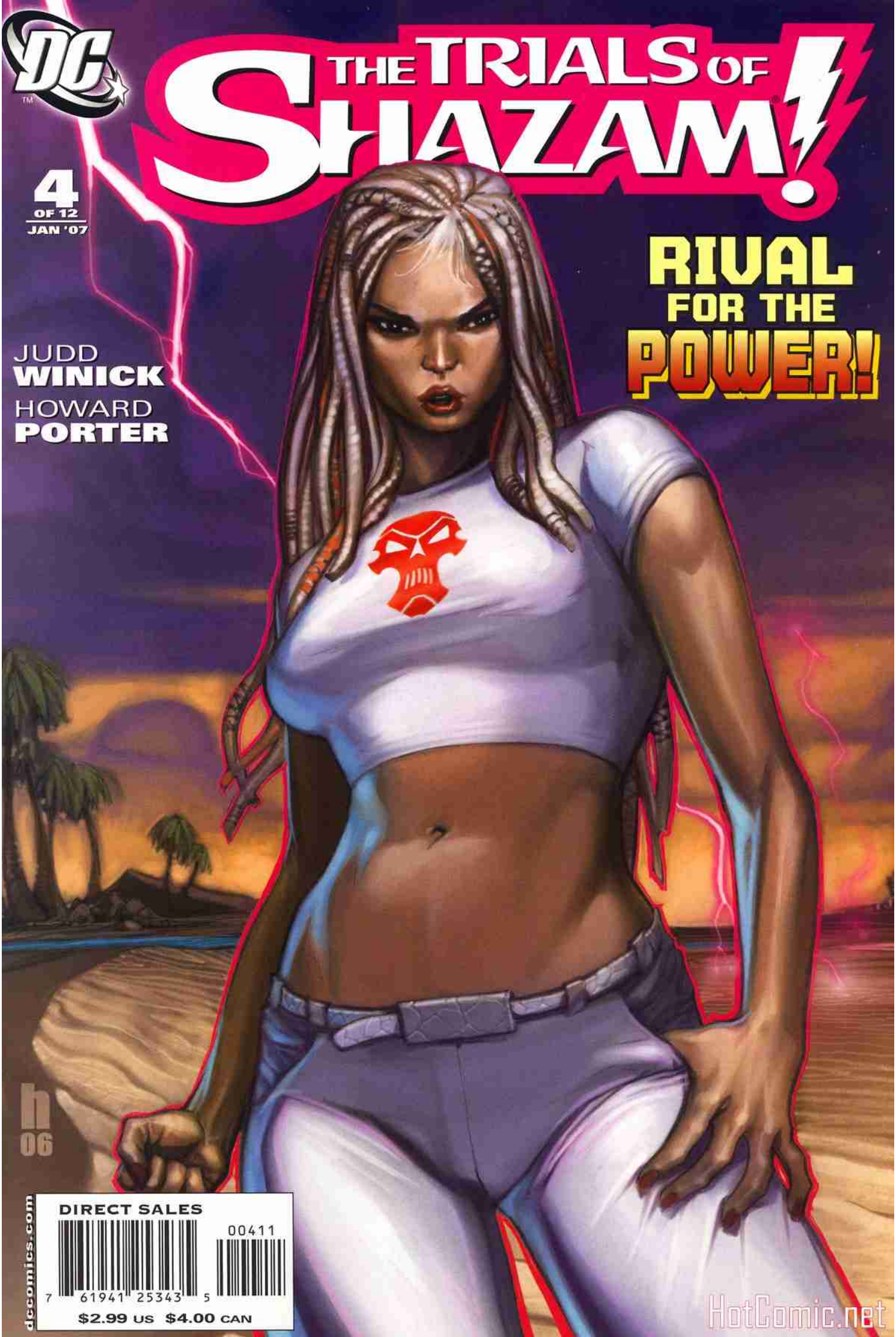
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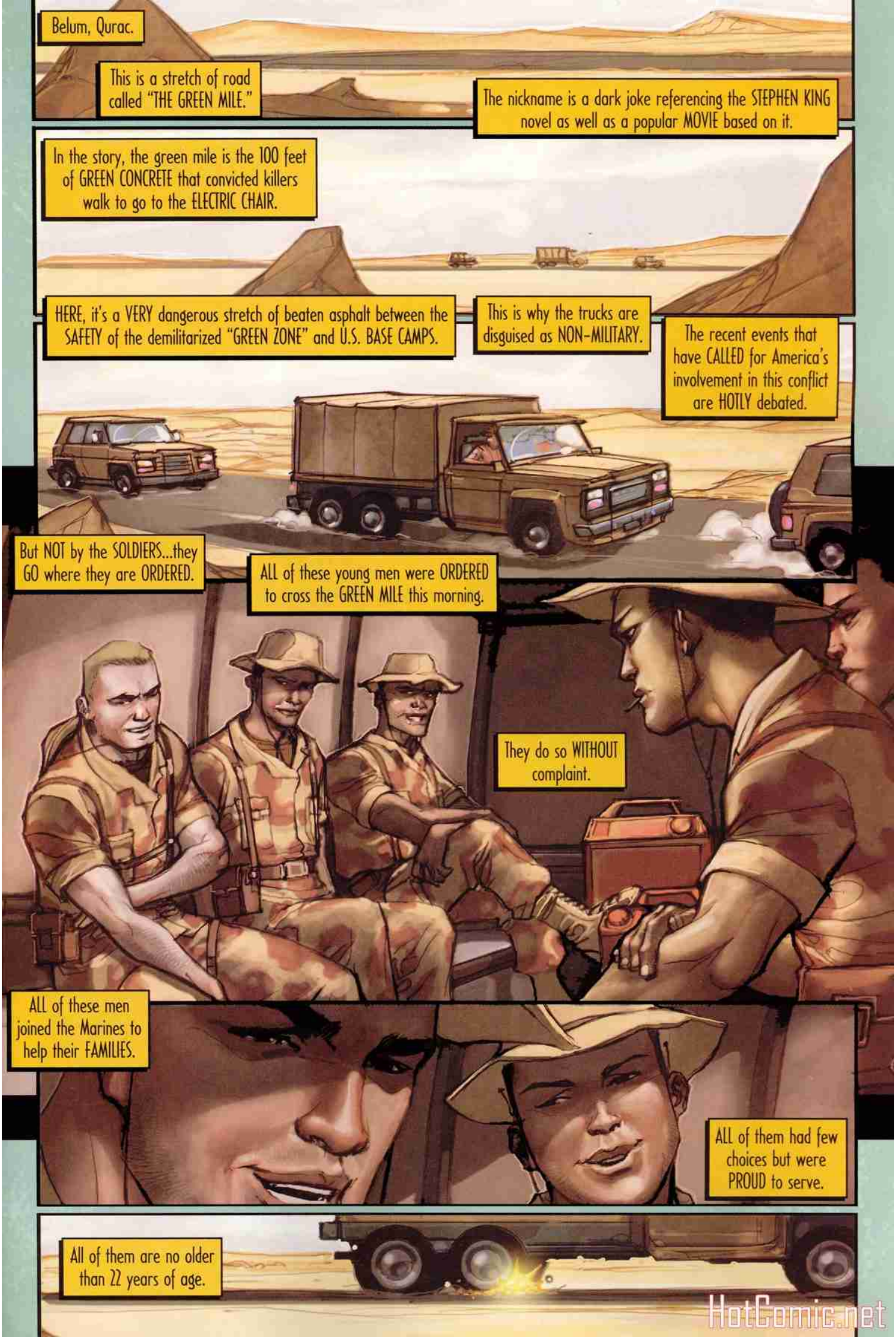
Belum, Qurac.
This is a stretch of road called "THE GREEN MILE."
The nickname is a dark joke referencing the STEPHEN KING novel as well as a popular MOVIE based on it.
In the story, the green mile is the 100 feet of GREEN CONCRETE that convicted killers walk to go to the ELECTRIC CHAIR.
HERE, it's a VERY dangerous stretch of beaten asphalt between the SAFETY of the demilitarized "GREEN ZONE" and U.S. BASE CAMPS.
This is why the trucks are disguised as NON-MILITARY.
The recent events that have CALLED for America's involvement in this conflict are HOTLY debated.
But NOT by the SOLDIERS...they GO where they are ORDERED.
ALL of these young men were ORDERED to cross the GREEN MILE this morning.
They do so WITHOUT complaint.
ALL of these men joined the Marines to help their FAMILIES.
ALL of them had few choices but were PROUD to serve.
All of them are no older than 22 years of age.
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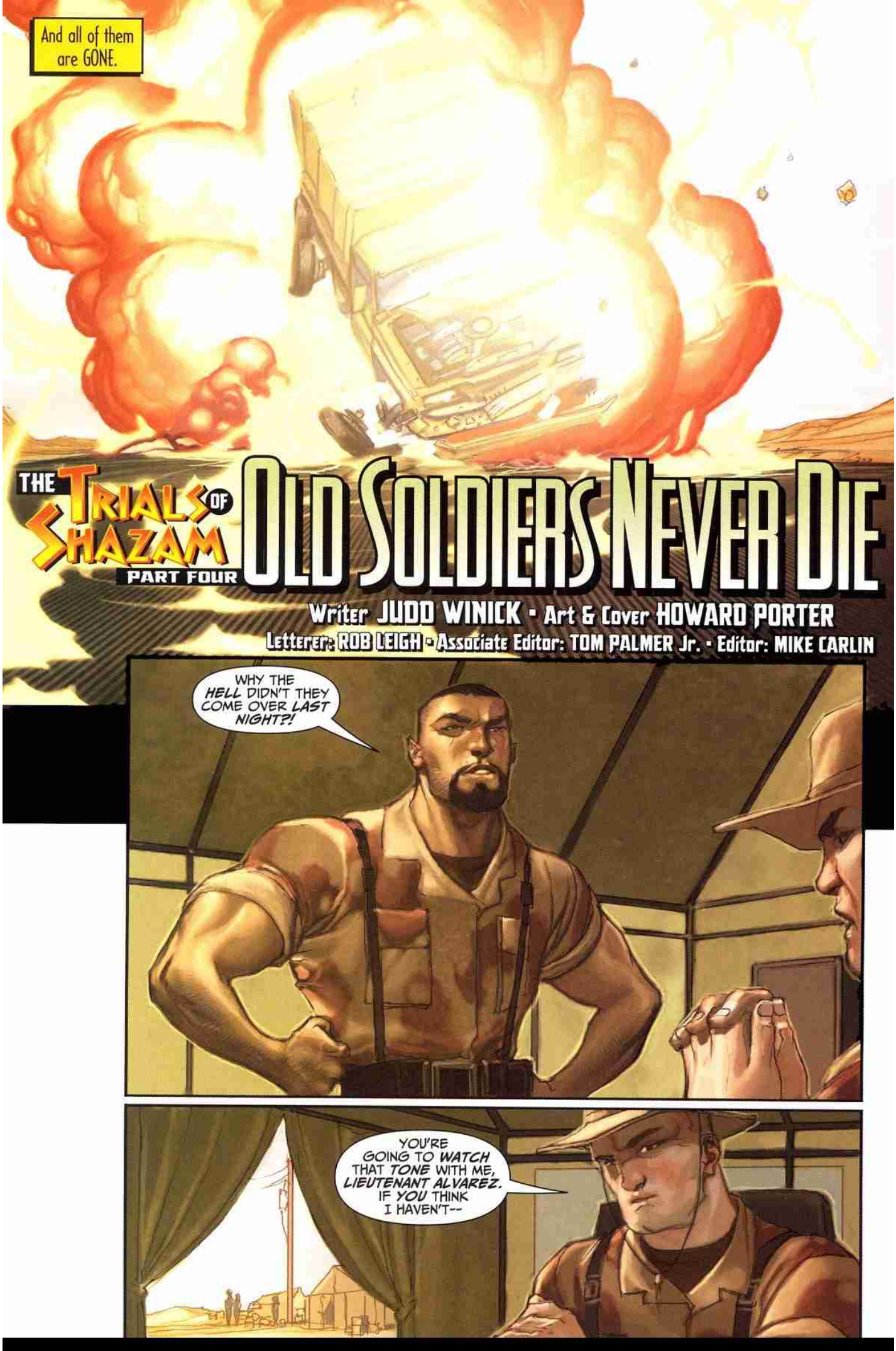
And all of them are GONE.
THE TRIALS OF SHAZAM
PART FOUR
OLD SOLDIERS NEVER DIE
Writer JUDD WINICK • Art & Cover HOWARD PORTER
Letterer: ROB LEIGH • Associate Editor: TOM PALMER Jr. • Editor: MIKE CARLIN
WHY THE HELL DIDN'T THEY COME OVER LAST NIGHT?!
YOU'RE GOING TO WATCH THAT TONE WITH ME, LIEUTENANT ALVAREZ. IF YOU THINK I HAVEN'T--

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THE ROAD WAS SWEPT LAST NIGHT, CAPTAIN. IT WAS CLEAN! I WOULDN'T--
TONE, ALVAREZ!
LOOK, IF YOU THINK I'M HAPPY THAT WE JUST LOST SIX MARINES, YOU'RE BAT@#$% CRAZY!
NOT JUST ANY MARINES--
--BUT SIX SERIOUS FIRE-EATING, FIGHTING MEN--
--MARINES THAT GOT BLOWN TO HELL THIS MORNING!
I KNOW YOU KNOW THIS, BECAUSE YOU HAND-PICKED THEM.
WHAT I DON'T KNOW IS WHAT DAMNED SPECIAL OPS DETAIL YOU ORDERED THEM IN ON...
IT'S CLASSIFIED.
NO KIDDING...
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"...I'M SURE THAT'LL MEAN A LOT TO THEIR FAMILIES."
LIEUTENANT ALVAREZ, SIR?!
PISS OFF, DENNY. I'M NOT BUYING ANY OF YOUR SCROUNGER CRAP TODAY.
NO, SIR, I HAVE ORDERS!
THIS IS CORPORAL FREEMAN AND SGT. BARAK.
CENTRAL COMMAND SENT THEM, THEY'RE ASSIGNED TO YOU FOR AN OP.
SAYS THEY'RE SPECIAL FORCES. LIKE YOU.
REALLY. THAT WAS FAST.
FOLLOW ME.
WHAT, LIKE NOW?
YES, MARINE, NOW.
Um, SIR, MAYBE I SHOULD SAY... WELL, WE'RE HERE FOR, THE TEST?
THE TRIALS. IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN...
ZAREB, HERE, CAN TELL YOU IF YOU DON'T ALREADY KNOW.
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WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO SAY?
Y'KNOW, ABOUT THE TEST. THE TRIALS.
YOU JUST SAID THAT. I THINK HE--
HEY.
THIS IS WHY I WANTED TO WAIT IN THE TRUCK.
DROP THE GLAMOR.
NOW.
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OR WHAT, YOU'RE GOING TO GUN US DOWN?
ONE--IN MY HANDS THIS IS A LOT MORE THAN A GUN...
...AND TWO--YES, I'LL KILL YOU.
DROP THE GLAMOR.
HE SHOULD DO IT.
WHY?
MAY THE SHAPE I ASSUME BE MY OWN.
FREDDY NEEDS THE PRACTICE.
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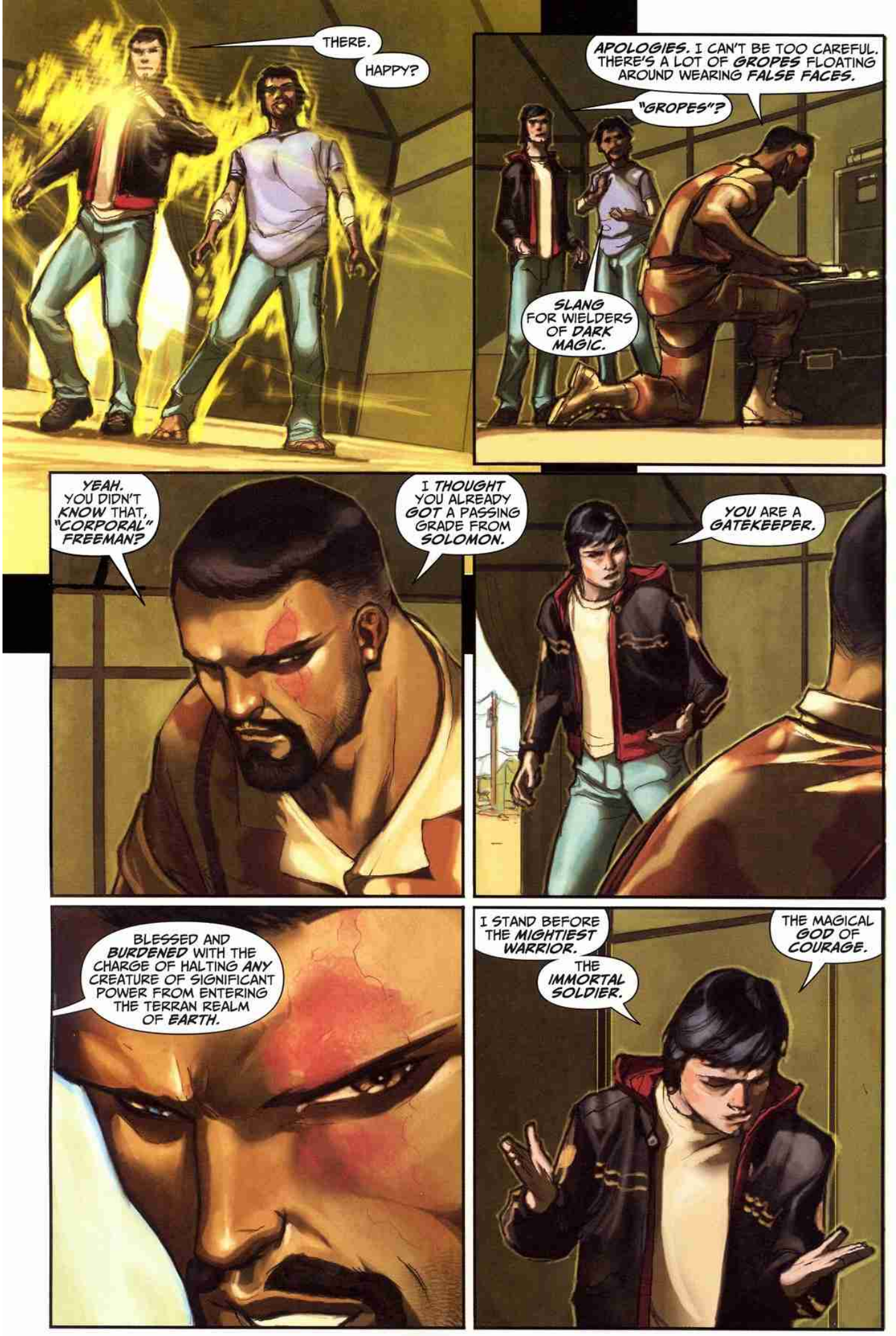
THERE.
HAPPY?
APOLOGIES. I CAN'T BE TOO CAREFUL. THERE'S A LOT OF GROPES FLOATING AROUND WEARING FALSE FACES.
"GROPES"?
SLANG FOR WIELDERS OF DARK MAGIC.
YEAH. YOU DIDN'T KNOW THAT, "CORPORAL" FREEMAN?
I THOUGHT YOU ALREADY GOT A PASSING GRADE FROM SOLOMON.
YOU ARE A GATEKEEPER.
BLESSED AND BURDENED WITH THE CHARGE OF HALTING ANY CREATURE OF SIGNIFICANT POWER FROM ENTERING THE TERRAN REALM OF EARTH.
I STAND BEFORE THE MIGHTIEST WARRIOR.
THE IMMORTAL SOLDIER.
THE MAGICAL GOD OF COURAGE.

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THE INVINCIBLE ACHILLES.
I AM YOUR PUPIL, YOUR SERVANT, YOUR ACOLYTE.
WHAT IS THY TRIAL?
FORMAL. I LIKE THAT. IT'S LIKE WE'RE "COURTING."
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BUT I REALLY DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS RIGHT NOW.
I'M ON A MISSION, AND I CAN'T BE TESTING YOUR METTLE.
COME BACK IN A WEEK AND I'LL MAKE YOU RUN WINDSPRINTS WITH MERCURIAL DEMONS.
I DON'T HAVE A WEEK.
THIS IS MY NEXT TRIAL.
WITH YOU...
AND FROM WHAT I HEAR, YOU'RE SHORT A FEW MEN.
IF BY "SHORT A FEW MEN," YOU MEAN THAT SIX SOLDIERS--
--WHO DIDN'T NEED ME TO BESTOW ANY COURAGE UPON THEM--
--ARE DEAD? YEAH, "I'M SHORT."
TAKE ME WITH YOU.
YOU EVER FIRED A GUN?
A FEW.
IN COMBAT? IN A FIRE FIGHT?
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LOOK, I'VE GOT A HATE EMPATH THAT MAY OR MAY NOT CRACK THROUGH A WEAK WALL INTO THIS REALM.
A HATE EMPATH IN THE MIDDLE EAST?
GODS ALMIGHTY.
NO. YA GOT ME...
I GUESS THAT WOULD MAKE THIS A PRETTY GOOD TEST, huh?
SO, YOU CAN SEE MY PROBLEM.
A CREATURE THAT DERIVES POWER FROM THE HATE IN MEN'S HEARTS, HERE IN THIS REGION...
IT'LL QUADRUPLE IN SIZE BY NIGHTFALL.
RIGHT.
SO, I DON'T CARE IF YOU EARN YOUR COURAGE.
I HAVE A JOB TO DO.
THEN LET'S GET IT DONE.
IT WON'T BE THAT SIMPLE...
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"...I THINK SOMEONE ELSE IS OUT HERE."
SIR, THERE ARE FEW WORDS THAT CAN BEST DESCRIBE THE IMMENSITY OF OUR GRATITUDE.
WELL, "IMMENSITY" AND "GRATITUDE" ARE DECENT STARTS.
FOR YOU TO OFFER THIS CHARITY, TO BUILD SCHOOLS WHEN SO MANY AMERICANS THINK THAT AN ARABIC CHILD'S EDUCATION--
--IS SIMPLY GEARED TOWARD PREPARING THEM TO BE ENSNARED IN THE EXTREMIST MADRASSAS.
WELL, THOSE KIDS DO SEEM TO BE BLOWING THINGS UP A LOT.
WELL, YES. BUT YOU SEEM TO UNDERSTAND THE FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN--
WHAT... WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOUR FACE?
DAMN.
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WHY ARE OUR GLAMOR SPELLS FADING?
IT IS COMING, SABINA. WITH THAT, THERE WILL BE DISRUPTIONS IN OUR SPELL WORK.
WELL, SINCE "ABDUL" HERE HAS KIND OF COME DOWN WITH A CASE OF DEATH--
--WE'LL HAVE TO WORK FASTER BEFORE HE'S MISSED.
AND WHAT OF THE WARRIOR?

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I'M HOPING HE GETS HERE IN A BIG HURRY...
"...AND I'M ESPECIALLY CURIOUS TO MEET HIS NEW FRIEND."
WHERE'S THE EMPATH COMING OUT?
I DON'T KNOW EXACTLY.
OH, RIGHT. IT'S KIND OF LIKE A COMET.
YEAH, I JUST KNOW THE GENERAL AREA AND APPROXIMATE TIME OF WHEN IT'S GOING TO COME AROUND.
WE JUST WAIT... WATCH... AND SEE WHAT WE SEE.
YOU SAID WE MAY NOT BE ALONE OUT HERE.
YEAH. I THINK THAT'S YOUR FAULT.
WHAT? THESE GUYS WHO ARE AFTER ME ARE HERE?
WE WEREN'T FOLLOWED. WE PULLED TWELVE LOCATION ENCHANTMENTS, AT LEAST NINE RUSE SPELLS FOR--
THEY DON'T NEED TO FOLLOW YOU, FREDDY.
THEY KNOW WHERE YOU'RE GOING.
YOU'RE SEEKING THE GODS OF MAGIC.
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ALL THEY NEED TO DO IS FIND US AND THEY'LL FIND YOU.
I'M SORRY. I DIDN'T MEAN TO MAKE THINGS HARDER FOR YOU.
ONE: DON'T EVER APOLOGIZE FOR WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO.
YOU'RE ON A MISSION, AND IT HAS TO GET DONE.
TWO: YOU HAVEN'T MADE ANYTHING HARDER FOR ME.
I'M A SOLDIER.
I GO WHERE I'M NEEDED. I GO WHERE I'M ORDERED.
WHO "ORDERS" YOU?
THE SAME AS YOU.
MAGIC.
THIS IS MY PLACE IN THE

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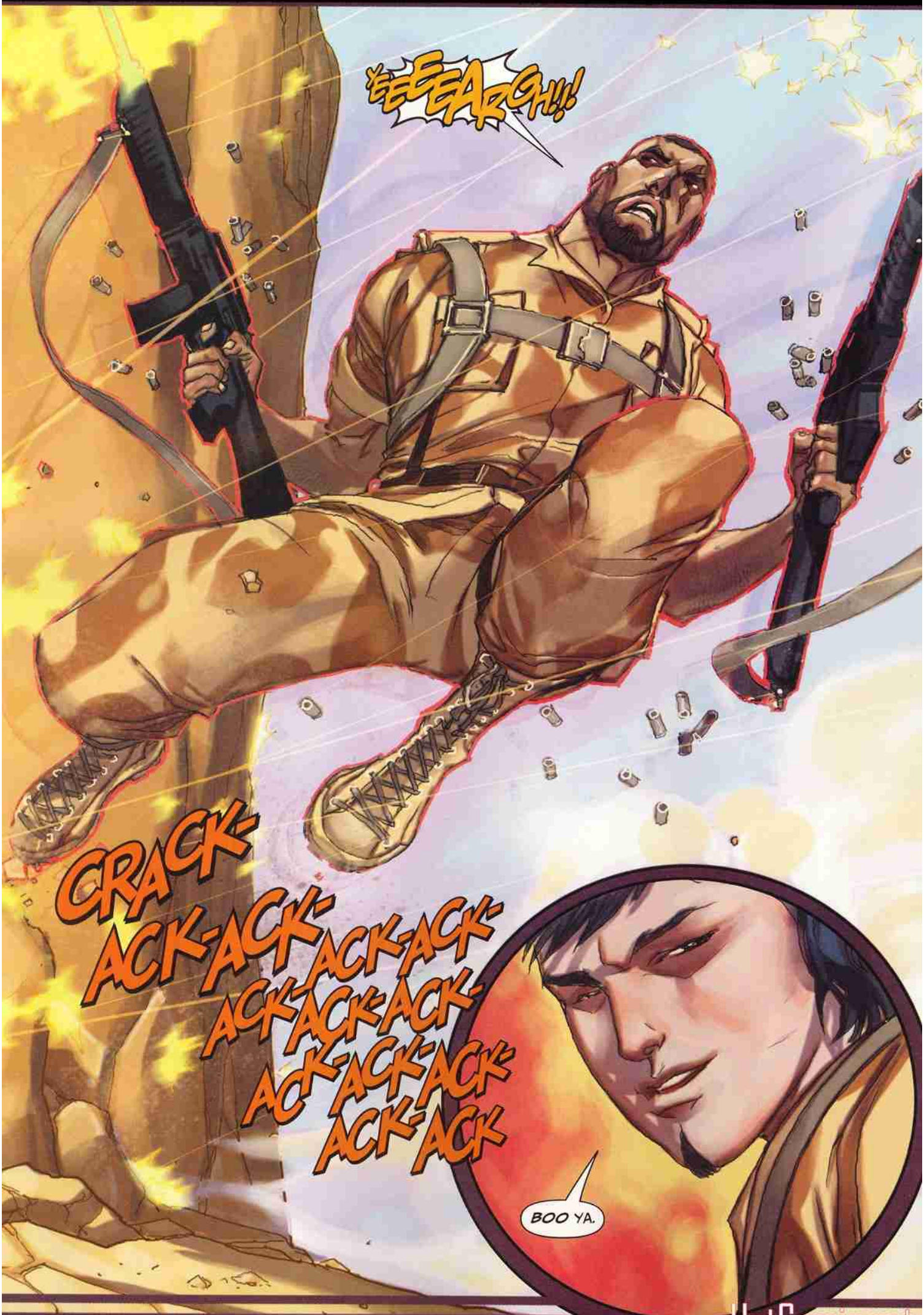


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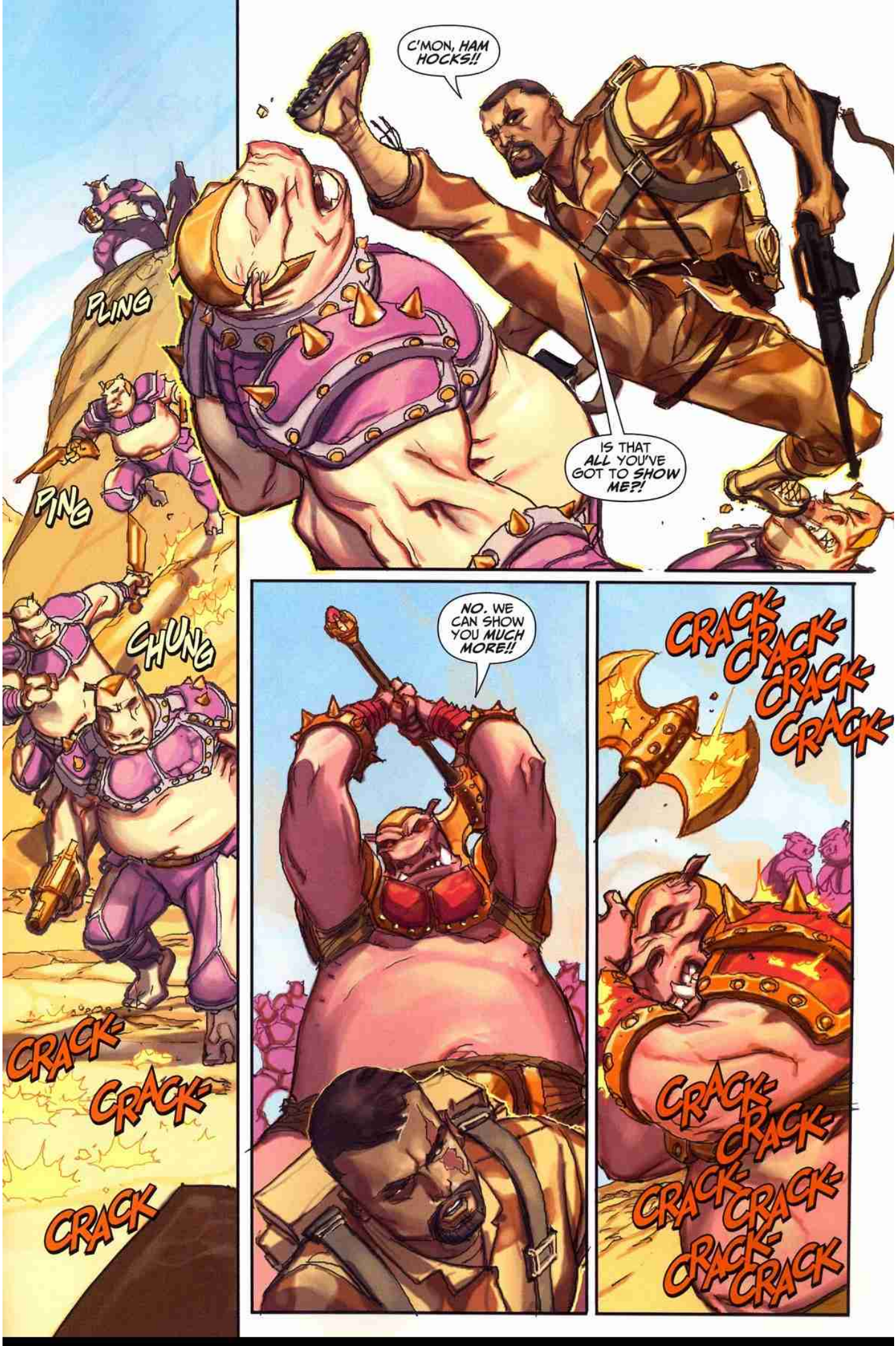


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I THINK I'M GETTING THE HANG OF THIS!!
I'M GLAD, BUT I THINK THIS MIGHT NOT BE THE BEST USE OF OUR TIME!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?!!
CRACK-
ACK-
ACK-
ACK-
ACK-
ACK-
ACK-
ACK
THIS IS JUST A DIVERSION...
"...SOMEONE ELSE IS AFTER THE EMPATH!!"
WITH POWER BELOW--LET THE DARKNESS BE FREED!!
WITH POWER BELOW--LET THE DARKNESS BE FREED!!
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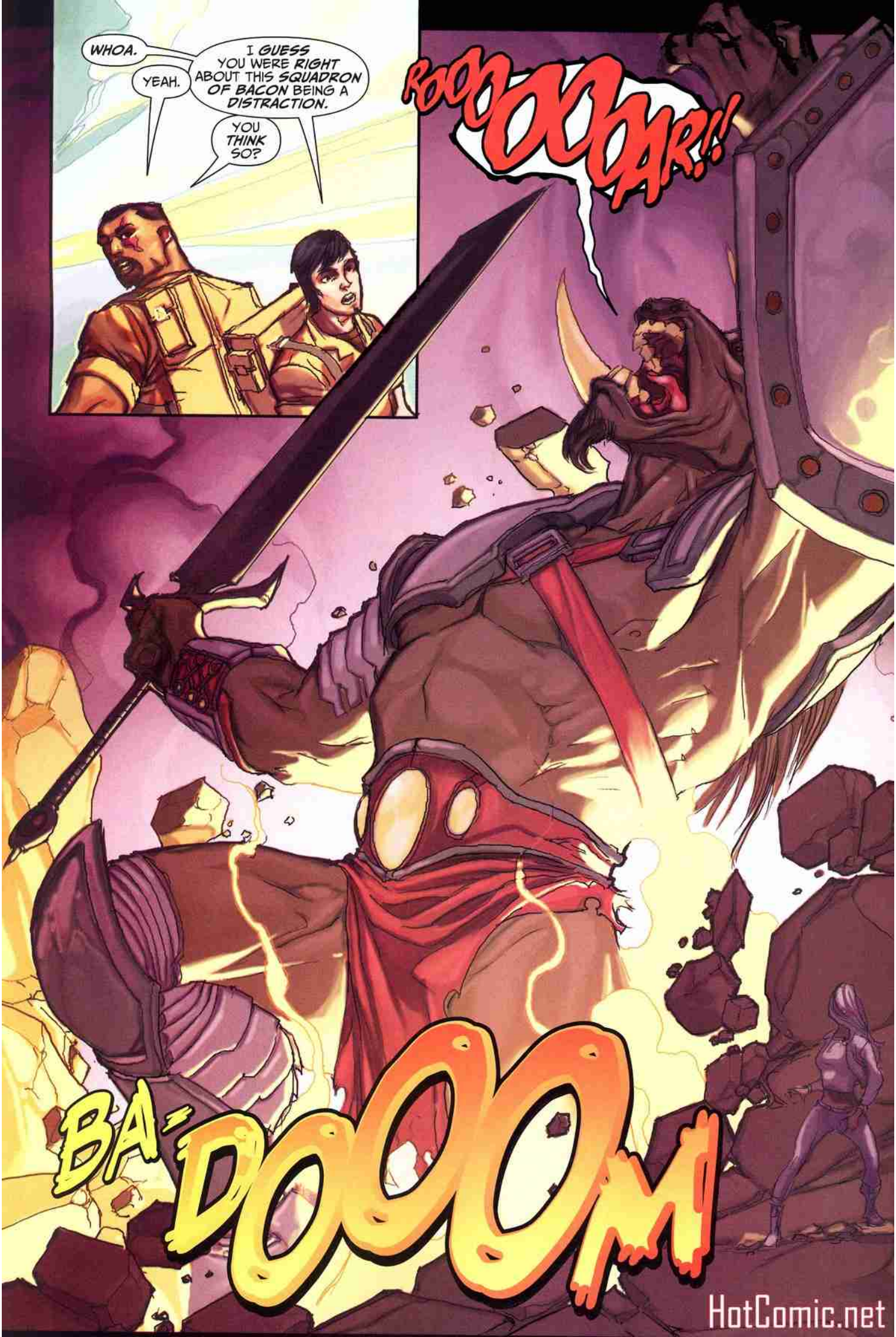


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Well, here we are, and it's the day before Thanksgiving and everyone is bringing in all types of turkey fixings for a pot-luck lunch, so while I sit here and try to digest my latest round of sausage stuffing, I am going to turn to my Editorial Staff and find out what they are thankful for this year....

**Michael Siglain** (Newly minted editor on 52) is thankful that the 52 writers have scripts in through week 45. He's also thankful for donuts and pie.

**Rachel Gluckstern** (just promoted associate editor) is thankful that she now gets to edit her own books, especially Justice League Unlimited; it gives her the chance to play around with all the DCU characters. Or as she puts it, "They're mine now! All MINE! MWAHAHAHAAA!!!"

**Joan Hilty** (ever versatile editor of various Johnny DC Comics, CHECKMATE, FLASH and OUTSIDERS) says, "I'm thankful for our ace lettering department, even as they pray for my death" because of the barrage of books she sends down to the wire.

**Tom Palmer Jr** (Mr. Team Supreme editing both SECRET SIX and FREEDOM FIGHTERS) is thankful that our comics are now printed on shiny paper.

He's also thankful for turducken. Whoever thought of stuffing a chicken inside a duck, inside a turkey should be given a gold medal.

**Mike Marts** (still learning his way around DC Editorial) is thankful for office supplies (very funny industry in joke, trust me) and his dog.

**Mike Carlin** (the man with more credentials than DC Nation pages) is thankful that Jeff Smith's SHAZAM is almost done and will be on sale in 2007!

**Mark Chiarello** (our erstwhile Art Director and sometime award-winning editor) is thankful for the final dialogue for the BATMAN/SPIRIT one-shot!

**Peter Tomasi** (the one person who can determine the winner in a fight between Batman and Green Lantern since he edits both) is currently thankful that Seven Soldiers is finally done and on the stands.

**Jann Jones** (Coordinating Editor/ Den Mother) is thankful for her new office view and alpacas that have soft padded feet that are easy on the land.

**Nachie Castro** (CATWOMAN's new guardian editor) is personally very, very thankful for coffee. And professionally, thankful every single time someone's script or art shows up.

**Harvey Richards** (the man behind the men of 52) is thankful for the Internet, because there's not enough time in the day to scan all of the references needed for 52. Thanks, fanboys!

**Simona Martore** (our new executive assistant) said (please read this with an Italian accent), "I am thankful for my new job and that Jeff Smith is working with us."

As for me, I am thankful for the incredible support you, our fans, have given us throughout the year and shown us at all the conventions. We've had a great run from Countdown to Crisis to One Year Later. As now, as we turn your attention to the skies, keep monitoring these pages and buckle your seatbeats — the best is yet to come.

To be continued... Dan DiDio

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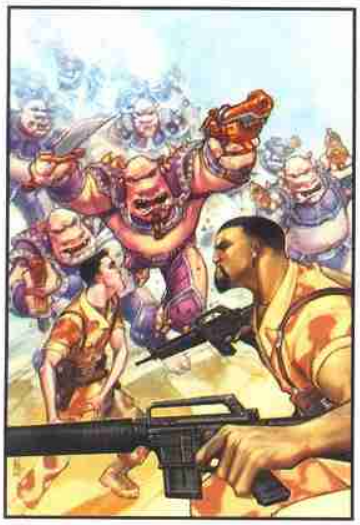
# DC NATION

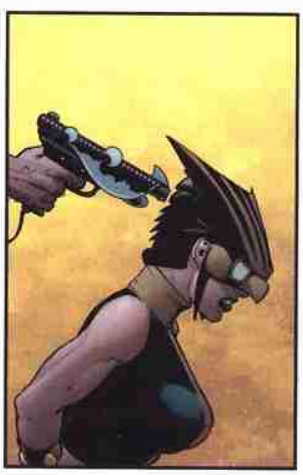
**For a complete list of this week's titles, sneak peeks, breaking news and more, visit us at dccomics.com**



## THE HOT LIST THIS WEEK

CONNOR HAWKE #1

GUY GARDNER #1



HAWKGIRL #58

Next in...

TRIALS OF SHAZAM #5

Sabina steps in and sabotages Freddy's latest trial--succeeding in taking some power for the Council!

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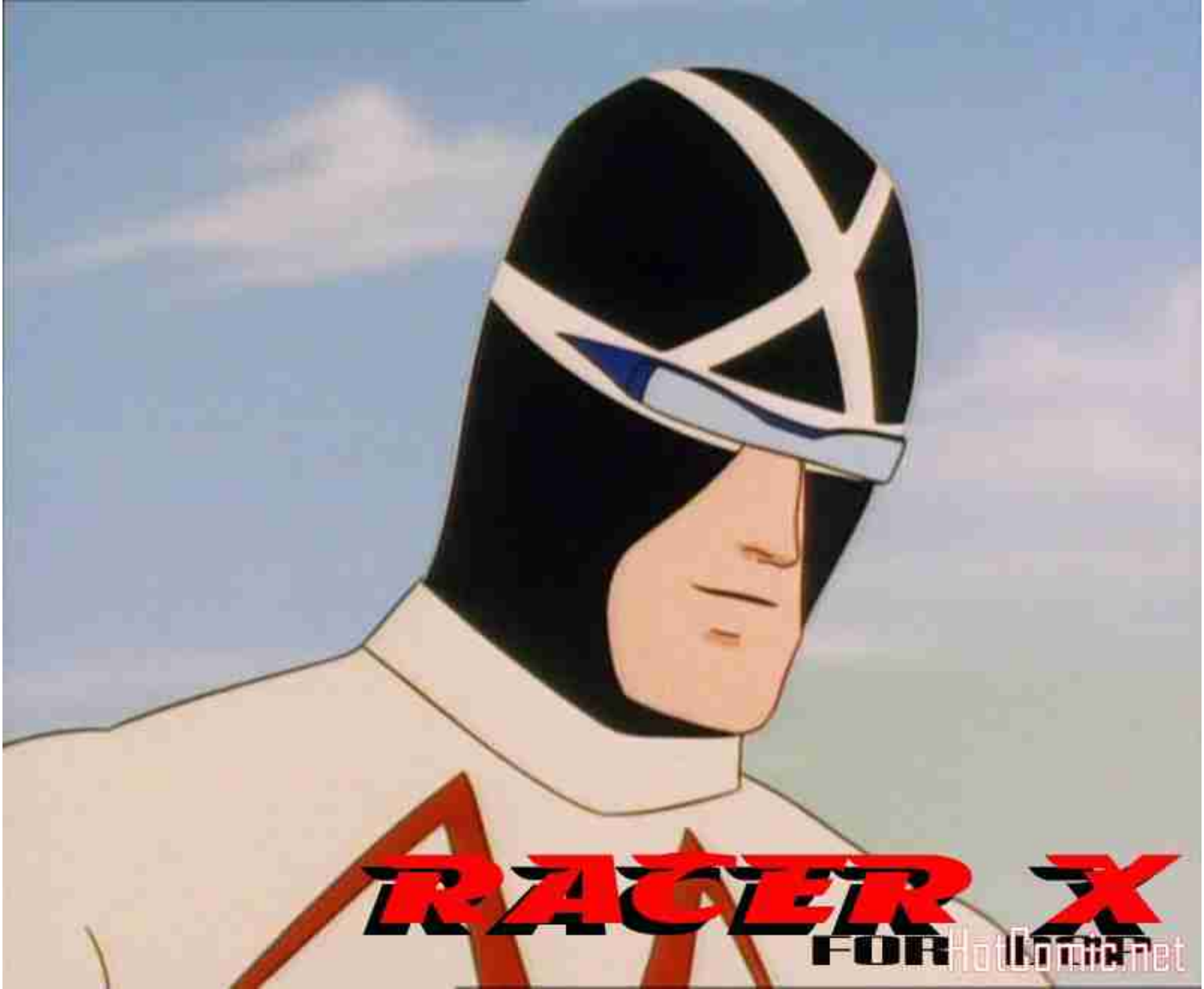
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